

# HEALTHY FOOD: KEEP IN REACH OF CHILDREN

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*Claudette Bailey, MS, Dietetic Intern*

"I like oatmeal," one preschool student at Our Play Station and Learning Center commented as the class named favorite foods. When asked who else liked oatmeal, a chorus of enthusiastic voices responded, "Me!"

Director Cheri Tanner never expected oatmeal to be so well-received when she started working with the Healthy Children, Healthy Weights (HCHW) program in January of 2011 to improve the menu and policies of Our Play Station. "When we started this and they told me that I had to get all whole grains... I thought, 'my children aren't going to like that.'" Tanner remarked, "I never used to cook oatmeal here, but I realized it was one of the quickest ways to get to whole grain. And I realized that the children actually like it."

Oatmeal was just the beginning for Tanner and Our Play Station as they embarked on their journey to becoming an Ohio Healthy Program with the help of HCHW. "Hannah Bills [HCHW program manager] gave me all these ideas," Tanner commented. She went on to describe "turkey wheels," one of the children's favorite meals served at the center, which are made with whole wheat tortillas.

In addition to her doubt that the children would accept healthier options, Tanner worried about the cost of changing her menu. "We are on such a tight, tight, tight budget," she commented. However, Tanner discovered that healthier choices don't have to cost more, stating, "I thought, 'This is going to be so expensive,' but I've learned that it's not."

Tanner remarked, "I love being a part of [HCHW] because we get more knowledge." With the program's guidance, Tanner successfully made over the menu of Our Play Station and implemented new policies to improve the wellbeing of the children she serves. Speaking about the children who attend the center, Tanner reflected that they "deserve my best, right down to the food."



*A preschool student at Our Play Station serves herself mixed vegetables as the dish is passed to her during the family-style lunch service.*

*For more information about the Healthy Children, Healthy Weights program, please [visit our website](#).*